

North East Beltline Joint Development Plan

Adopted by the North East Beltline Joint Planning Board
1998

The Charter Township of Plainfield
The Charter Township of Grand Rapids
The City of Grand Rapids

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Introduction - Project History

In 1996 staff and officials of Plainfield Township, Grand Rapids Township and the City of Grand Rapids realized that they were facing some common challenges along the East Beltline. Newly annexed land required zoning designation. Annexation itself clouded relationships between neighboring governments with land owners, developers and citizen groups in between. Sewer and water agreements were up for discussion. There was fear of the East Beltline becoming a commercial strip. There was little communication between land use planners responsible for adjacent land in the corridor.

By the latter part of 1996, the three units of government, along with the help of Grand Valley Metro Council and the Michigan Department of Transportation, agreed to plan development and work toward common standards for land along and near the East Beltline. Memoranda of Understanding were adopted along with a scope of work. Each unit agreed to contribute funds and staff time. MDOT contributed \$25,000 and staff assistance. GVMC staff coordinated the project and contributed staff time to planning and analysis.

A joint planning board was set up with three representatives from each participant. The representatives were:

Mr. James S. Banta	Planning Commissioner	Grand Rapids Township
Ms. Marsha Bouwkamp	Supervisor	Grand Rapids Township
Mr. Dave Groenleer	Planning Commissioner	Plainfield Township
Rev. George Heartwell	City Commissioner	City of Grand Rapids
Mr. George Meek	Planning Commission Chair	Plainfield Township
Ms Lynn Rabaut	City Commissioner	City of Grand Rapids(Second Year)
Ms. Suzanne Slot	Treasurer	Plainfield Township
Mr. David A. Van Dyke	Planning Commissioner	Grand Rapids Township
Ms Gabriel Works	Planning Commission Chair	City of Grand Rapids
Ms. Sharon Worst	City Commissioner	City of Grand Rapids (First Year)

Mr. Jerry Felix, Executive Director of the Grand Valley Metro Council, was chosen as the Chairman of the board.

The board chose a consultant to assist staff and carry out public involvement activities.

Most of the work of staff and board was carried out during 1997. This included:

Key contacts

Interviews with corridor area property owners, business operators, and residents were conducted to catalogue land development issues.

SWOT assessment

Two public involvement workshops were held in February to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the corridor.

Background data investigation

Project staff collected the following background data: economic assessment, traffic, zoning, natural features, utilities, existing land use, and adopted future land use proposals.

Design charrette

Another public involvement workshop was held in May to craft alternative design scenarios for the corridor.

Recommended plan

Project staff prepared a recommended plan for the Joint Planning Board's consideration. The draft plan was sent by the Board for review by member planning commissions and the public. Three opportunities for local review of the recommended plan were scheduled:

October 7, 1997, Plainfield Township Hall, Joint Planning Commission, Township Board, Board of Zoning Appeals

October 23, 1997, City of Grand Rapids, Planning Commission

October 28, 1997, Grand Rapids Township Hall, Planning Commission

Social equity issues were raised and staff and board examined the impact of the plan on the central city and lower income households. Recommendations for providing affordable housing and improving public transportation were included in the implementation section of the plan.

Based on additional input, a final plan was adopted by the Joint Planning Board in early 1998.

At their final meeting the board adopted a document recommending implementation measures. The Board also recommended that a working committee with staff and elected or appointed officials from each unit be established to oversee the implementation of the plan and to review developments in the planning area.

Plan Objectives

These objectives reflect the insights gained during stake-holder discussions and interviews, the planning charrette held earlier this year and the on-going Planning Committee meetings.

These objectives were subsequently used in preparing staff recommendations for a consensus land use plan. In preparing that plan, the study objectives were constantly compared to land use proposals for consistency and appropriateness. By using these objectives as measuring sticks in preparing the plan, staff made sure that they did what they said and that the plan reflects the values expressed by the public, individual sponsoring jurisdictions and agencies and the Planning Committee.

Transportation Objectives

Relieve and better manage future traffic along the East Beltline by developing and/or improving a parallel road system.

Improve Dunningan/Hoag/Bird Avenues in order to provide an alternate means of north/south access for local traffic.

Accommodate pedestrian and bike ways that tie into a regional network following the Metro Bike Plan. Critical links should occur at Three Mile, Five Mile and Leffingwell as well as neighborhoods, the Kent Skills Center, the Meijer Botanical Gardens, parks and open space areas and community, commercial and employment areas.

Encourage cross easements or shared access between properties to minimize direct access and curb cuts onto the East Beltline.

Promote development patterns that can accommodate future bus/transit service. This includes such design considerations as carefully taking into account the relationship of a building to roads, streets and parking lots, accommodating sidewalks, and providing opportunities for future bus stops and shelters.

Promote corridor development whose focus is the surrounding community and neighborhoods. Appropriate commercial land uses would include personal services and special retail while regionally serving commercial and "big box" uses would be discouraged.

Explore interchange options that could accommodate west bound traffic at the I-96/I-196 junction.

Land Use Objectives

Respect existing land forms by minimizing excavation, protecting and preserving steep slopes and maintaining scenic views and vistas.

Encourage development that is compatible with surrounding land uses and plans.

Promote focused development that integrates a mix of land use types at specific nodes, or

locations, along the East Beltline.

Maintain and/or support commercial activity centers at the corners of the East Beltline and Leonard, Knapp and Three Mile.

Determine if existing employment or commercial centers can be redeveloped or compatible infill development accommodated so that scarce land resources in the corridor are maximized.

Provide choice in housing types and lot sizes in the corridor.

Promote the development of neighborhoods by allowing a mix of land uses such as residential, commercial, employment and recreation, to occur within a tightly defined area.

Provide opportunities for varying forms of elderly housing such as congregate care, life care and nursing homes along the corridor and within close proximity to commercial centers.

Support the development of day care centers.

Provide support services for existing development such as lodging, restaurants, personal services, and parks.

Implement maximum parking standards as a means of minimizing impervious surfaces and reducing the visual impacts of large parking lots.

Deal with storm water management in a more coordinated and regional manner that better responds to natural drainage courses.

Maintain a natural edge along the East Beltline through gracious development setbacks, preserving natural vegetation and utilizing innovative and low maintenance landscapes along the corridor and the highway right-of-way.

Reduce the scale, appearance and clutter of signs so that they do not dominate or overwhelm scenic views and vistas.

Prepare a uniform set of corridor development, design and review standards that apply to all involved jurisdictions.

Utilize the following range of development densities when analyzing residential land use:

0 to 4 units/acre = low

5 to 8 units/acre = medium

9 to 16 units/acre = high

Background Studies

Background studies by staff and consultant covered the following topics. The detailed reports can be found in the appendix of this plan. Each participating jurisdiction has a copy of the appendix.

Steep land and undeveloped areas

Staff examined the corridor and mapped out existing land uses and the land's physical character. Topography and water features are quite limiting characteristics of much of the area. Consequently, a map was made showing undeveloped areas that were not too steep for development and were not covered by water features. This resulted in the map of "development areas" which are numbered and used as a basis for the final land use plan.

Public Utilities

The development areas were further constrained by the possibility of sewer and water service. The Metropolitan Sewer and Water Plan shows the future service area for these utilities. In reality, the extreme topography and the fact that this area is at the edge of a thinly stretched and convoluted sewer network makes development which would be dependent on public sewer services impractical in many parts of the planning area. These conditions strongly affected the land use plan.

Existing and Approved Development

Staff and consultant spoke with existing institutions and landowners along the corridor and ascertained any likely expansion of approved uses. This information provided part of the framework and limits for the final plan. These interviews also gave a more detailed picture of the character of some of the sites, which led to a more realistic plan.

Transportation

Present and projected future traffic conditions on the East Beltline were examined and reported. The highway is and will be congested. Everyone recognized that the East Beltline is the most important north south transportation facility on the east side of the metropolitan area. In fact, the importance of this plan for Plainfield Township has more to do with the use of the road by the rest of the Township than the land use decisions along it.

The importance of preserving the capacity of the road led the planning board, staff and citizens to follow principles that would lead to less traffic. These included: concentration of development in spots on the corridor instead of dispersion along the corridor; group uses which would otherwise generate trips to each other; orientation of development toward internal traffic connections; planning for land uses which would eliminate trips from the planning area to more distant destinations; improvement of pedestrian and bicycle connections so short auto trips can be eliminated; promotion of access management measures; suggesting the improvement of the street network adjacent to the East Beltline to provide alternate routes for neighborhood trips.

Market Conditions

The consultant, Wade-Trim, carried out a market study of the demand and need for

various land uses. Population and employment trends showed a future demand for substantially more housing, especially smaller housing units; a strong growth in retail and commercial uses; a growth in office use; and a very limited need for industrial land uses. In the social equity report staff compared the demand for office space to the amount of land planned regional for that use. These analyses tempered the proposed land use plan.

Local Plans and Zoning

The zoning ordinances of all three governments were examined, compared and a report was written. Composite maps of zoning and land use plans were used as a backdrop to the plan.

Social Equity

Staff looked at the impacts of the plan on the central city and low income households in respect to employment, transportation and housing. It was found that significant actions could be taken to increase the supply of affordable housing and to improve public transportation for this area. A fair share of affordable housing needed in the region was calculated for the corridor and means of achieving that share were recommended to the participants. Low cost and needed public transit improvements were described and recommended.

Development Plan

Plan Overview

The corridor is divided into a **built environment zone** (1-96 to Three Mile Road) and a **natural assets zone** (Three Mile Road to Plainfield). Land use proposals are organized around five future use activity nodes.

Bradford Gateway Area:

Properties clustered around the Meijer Gardens. Future use orientation as a destination place. Greatest potential for office and institutional uses, and supporting commercial uses (transient lodging, restaurants, etc.).

Knapp Corners Area:

Properties clustered near Knapp Road and East Beltline. Create corridor "town center" consisting of a mixed use environment (retail, office, residential) that provides concentrated access with limited potential for sprawl. Commercial area designed to serve neighboring higher density residential development.

Evergreen Area:

Properties located near the Three Mile Road intersection. Proposed to coordinate with established commercial activities serving neighboring residential areas and provide in-fill opportunities for office and institutional uses.

Orchard View Area:

Properties located near the Four Mile Road intersection. Existing character dominated by Robinette's Orchards and Sunshine Church uses. Continue community-oriented uses, allowing for addition of low intensity development (urban agriculture, low density residential, special purpose residential, i.e. elderly housing, assisted living.).

Hillside Area:

Centered at Five Mile Road and extending to Plainfield. In-fill residential compatible with existing residential densities recommended. Maintaining important vistas offered by varied topography is primary objective.

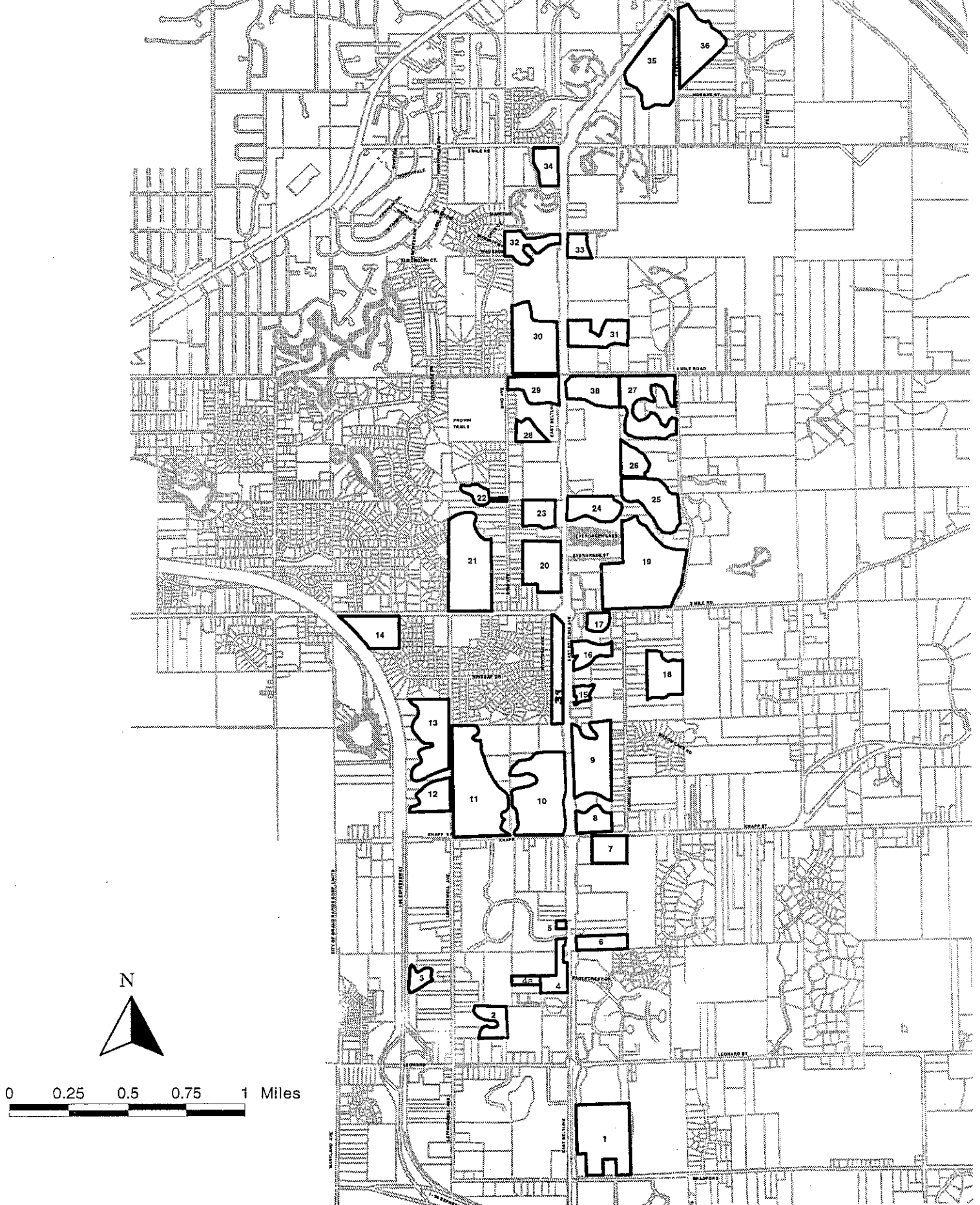
Land Use Plan Descriptions by Parcel

The following land use descriptions have been adopted for the numbered parcels identified as potential development sites within the study area. The land use descriptions include the location of the parcel, significant physical characteristics, and the rationale for the land use designation.

Parcel 1:

Parcel 1 is in close proximity to the 1-96/North East Beltline interchange, directly adjacent to the Meijer Botanical Gardens, and across from Cornerstone College and the proposed Spectrum Health Medical campus. The parcel lies within the Bradford Gateway activity node which is intended to serve as a primary point of entry and departure (gateway) to the North East Beltline area.

North East Beltline Planning Sites



development. The property could potentially be accessed by the Kent Community Skills Center access road.

It is recommended that Parcel 4 be developed for office use. This recommendation is made in consideration of the parcel's configuration, the adjacent existing and planned land uses (existing institutional and medium density residential use and existing/planned offices uses east of it, across the North East Beltline). It is further recommended that the development plan for Parcel 4 pursue the concept of shared access with the Kent Community Skills Center to eliminate the need for an additional nonresidential curb cut at this location.

Parcel 4a:

Immediately west of Parcel 4 is an approximately 12.2-acre area juxtaposed between medium-density residential to its south, proposed office use to its east, and an expanded park environment to its west.

Given this orientation, it is recommended that *Parcel 4a be developed for medium-density residential use.* This would establish a logical land use transition between the planned office area and park, allow for the expansion of the medium-density residential area to its south, and provide an opportunity for future residents to enjoy an abutting recreation space.

Parcel 5:

Parcel 5 is located between the Kent Community Skills Center access road and the Knapp's Corner commercial center. The parcel is relatively small and does not have access to the North East Beltline. A stub road currently provides access to Parcel 5 through the Knapp's Corner development.

It is recommended that Parcel 5 be developed for commercial use. A commercial use designation for this property provides for a natural extension of the Knapp's Corner development without encouraging strip commercial development. Access should be restricted to the existing stub road or provided by the Kent Community Skills Center access road.

Parcel 6:

Parcel 6 is generally located between an existing office park (Eagle Crest) and additional area planned for office uses. Within this environment, the property immediately north of Parcel 6 is being considered as a restaurant site. Currently, the existing and planned office uses are not well served by business/employee support uses.

The land use designation for Parcel 6 is divided between two classifications. The frontage along the North East Beltline is designated for mixed service uses and the rear portion is designated for office use. The mixed service designation is intended to encourage the creation of a more self-supportive business environment and reduce vehicle trips on the North East Beltline. Mixed service uses may include the following:

- convenience retail (card shop, office supply/support uses, etc.)

Parcel 1 is recommended for mixed service uses which include the following:

an expansion area for the Meijer Botanical Gardens

lodging facilities to meet the needs of corridor institutions, businesses and area residents

service-oriented commercial uses for existing and planned institutional and business uses such as restaurants, education/training facilities, professional offices (realtor, travel agency), business services (reproduction services, package delivery stations), and personal services (tailor, dry cleaners)

This designation recognizes the parcel's regional accessibility, its location at a gateway to the North East Beltline, and the adjacent land use pattern. The Meijer Botanical Gardens, which lies along the eastern edge of Parcel 1, will provide a buffer area between the recommended nonresidential uses and the existing residential uses to the east.

If adjacent properties are acquired by the property owner of Parcel 1, we recommend that the same land use recommendations be applied to the acquired property to provide for continuity in development patterns.

Parcel 2:

Parcel 2 is an interior parcel which is bounded by single-family residential uses to the south and west and institutional uses to the north and east. The parcel represents the undeveloped portions of several contiguous parcel; the parcel does not have independent access or road frontage.

Given the parcels limited development potential and the need to maintain appropriate land use relationship between the existing and future uses, *Parcel 2 is suggested for park/open space use.* Park use will bridge the function of the Kent Community Skills Center and the needs of area residents. Citizen input received throughout this process indicated a need for additional neighborhood parkland in the vicinity; however, such land use must be coordinated with Kent Community Skills Center plan for site use.

The boundaries of Parcel 2 should be expanded to include additional property to the north to maximize the recreational opportunities which may be offered at the site.

Parcel 3:

Parcel 3 is located adjacent to 1-96 in an area of low density single-family residential use. In fact, Parcel 3 is comprised of the undeveloped portions of large single-family home sites.

Given its location behind existing single-family homes, it is recommended that the *parcel be designated for low density single-family use.*

Parcel 4:

Parcel 4 is located between the North East Beltline and the Kent Community Skills Center. To the south, the property has been converted to medium density residential use. The parcel has frontage on the East Beltline and a shallow depth. The parcel's shallow depth constrains commercial development options and may encourage strip commercial

professional offices

- business service uses (reproduction services, package delivery stations)
- restaurants
- personal service uses (tailor, barber shop, dry cleaning, etc.)

The mixed service designation assigned to Parcel 6 differs from that recommended for Parcel 1 in the scope of the uses allowed, service orientation of the uses, and the scale of the development. Future development proposals for Parcel 6 should orient the buildings and parking areas toward the existing and planned office buildings. Sidewalks and sight lines should physically and visually connect the mixed service area to the office environment.

The office use designation is consistent with the existing development pattern.

Parcel 7:

Parcel 7 is located off the North East Beltline, on the south side of Knapp's Street. It is bounded on the west by a site proposed for construction of a bank. To the south, it is bounded by a two major public uses: a Township Park and the Grand Rapids Township Hall. The Township Park also separates Parcel 7 from residential uses to the east. Parcel 7 lies within the Knapp's Corner activity node which encourages a variety of land uses in a town center environment.

Parcel 7 has been designated for park and open space. Adjoining governmental offices and existing open space areas make it uniquely well suited to serve in this use classification.

Parcel 8:

Parcel 8 is located at the northeast corner of the Knapp's Street and North East Beltline intersection. Parcel 8 is bounded by a pond to the north and low density residential uses to the east. It lies within the Knapp's Corner activity node which is intended to promote a town center environment that includes a variety of land uses.

The land use designation for Parcel 8 is divided between two classifications. Land immediately adjacent to the intersection is planned for office use. The balance of the parcel (as it extends east along Knapp's Street) has been designated for high-density residential use. This designation is based on the parcel's location within the planned town center district and the physical and visual transition such use will provide between the planned commercial corners on the west side of the intersection and the residential uses which dominate on the east side of the intersection.

Parcel 9:

Parcel 9 has extensive frontage along the East Beltline and is characterized by its

variation in topographic elevation. Parcel 9 encompasses some of the higher elevations within the study area. Parcel 9 also lies within the Knapp's Corner activity node which is intended to promote a town center environment that encourages a variety of land uses.

Parcel 9 has been designated for high density residential land use. This land use designation is intended to help provide the density of population required to support a town center area and supports for the residential portion of the mixed use concept. This land use designation also provides for a transitional use between the North East Beltline and the low density residential uses which front Dunnigan and beyond to the east.

Parcel 10:

Parcel 10 is located at the northwest corner of the North East Beltline and Knapp's Street. It is also a part of the Knapp's Corner activity node. The Knapp's Corner activity node encourages the establishment of a town center area. Parcel 10 is noteworthy because of its large size, balanced proportions, and visibility. Parcel 10 is accessible by the North East Beltline as well as Knapp's Street, a major east-west thoroughfare which crosses I-96. It is also primarily undeveloped.

Parcel 10 is recommended for mixed use development that integrates commercial, office, cultural, institutional and/or residential uses within a single development area. The integration of uses may be achieved vertically (as in the stories of a building) or horizontally (across the whole parcel). The overall character of the Knapp's Corner activity node should be closely related to the design character of this particular parcel. As a result, it is recommended that the parcel be developed as a "village-like" environment. The development plan should embrace the following design objectives:

- respond to the natural features of the parcel and incorporate those features as development amenities;
- the buildings are designed to maintain a human scale, including facade and roof articulations;
- automobile facilities do not dominate the development appearance (parking
- lots are landscaped and screened from views from the right-of-way);
- the property boundaries and entrances are characterized by architectural and landscape features which establish edges and street walls;
- pedestrian pathways connect parking areas and buildings;
- lighting levels are established in accord to their purpose (pedestrian, parking, vehicular travel); and
- .. signs, light fixtures, and other street furniture reinforce an overall design concept.

Parcel 10 has been designated for mixed use development because of its accessibility and visibility. The parcel's size and configuration are well-suited to master planning for "village-like" design. And, finally, because the parcel is undeveloped, a unique design concept may be developed and implemented.

Parcel 11:

Parcel 11 is located at the northeast corner of Knapp's Street and Leffingwell Avenue. It is within the outer boundaries of the Knapp's Corners activity node. The parcel may be accessed via Leffingwell, a residential collector street and/or Knapp's Street, a major east-west thoroughfare which crosses I-96. The parcel abuts a low density single-family subdivision to the north and a natural area of ponds and steep slopes to the east.

Parcel 11 is recommended for medium density residential use. As with the land use recommendation for Parcel 9, this designation is intended to help provide the density of population required to support a town center area and provides for the residential portion of the mixed use concept.

The medium density residential concept may embrace a variety of housing types provided that the overall density of the area is maintained. Future development should incorporate the pond and steep slope area as part of the project's aesthetic and functional assets. In addition to maximizing views of these features, the development should include a pedestrian/open space network that connects the home sites to this area. Non-motorized connections to the adjacent mixed use development is strongly encouraged.

Parcels 12 and 13 (part):

Parcels 12 and the southern one-half of Parcel 13 are located between Leffingwell and I-96, immediately west of the Knapp's Corner town center area. Parcel 12 abuts an institutional site.

The parcels are also proximate to environmentally sensitive areas. Their proximity to the expressway and neighboring relationship to the proposed Knapp's Corner Town Center area and abutting institutional site makes them well suited for *medium density residential development*. Increased density will afford an expanded household market base near existing and planned shopping opportunities, while also acting as a transitional land use between retail/institutional uses fronting Knapp Street and the low density single-family development to its north.

Parcels 13 (part) and 14:

Parcel 13 is divided by a natural swale, which traverses it from west to east. As noted above, the southern one-half of Parcel 13 is planned for medium density residential. It is proposed that the portion of Parcel 13 north of the swale be planned for low density residential use, inasmuch as it presently adjoins such development at its north.

Parcel 14 is similarly so classified for low density residential use. This recommendation is made in consideration of the existing land use pattern in the area and the lack of available utilities.

Parcels 15,16 and 17:

Parcels 15, 16 and 17 lie along the east side of the North East Beltline near its intersection with 3 Mile Road. The parcels lie within an area that has partially developed into low density single-family use. The parcels are also within an area that is noteworthy for its woodlands and varied topographic elevations above the roadway. Generally, existing properties have adequate lot width and depth to provide for additional residential development. The parcels are within close proximity to the neighborhood commercial area which is at the heart of the Evergreen activity node.

Parcels 15, 16 and 17 have been designated for medium density residential use. Medium density residential development will provide property owners with some development and site planning flexibility. Medium density residential development will also be compatible with the natural characteristics of the parcels. Potential access from Dunnigan and/or adjacent developments should be explored as a means of limiting curb cuts at this location.

Parcel 18:

Parcel 18 is located to the east of Dunnigan, in an area which has developed in low density single-family residential uses. The area is not serviced by public utilities.

Parcel 18 is recommended for low density residential use. This recommendation is made in consideration of the existing land use pattern in the area and the lack of public utilities.

Parcels 19, 25,26 and 27:

Parcels 19, 25, 26 and 27 are located between 3 and 4 Mile Roads and west of Hoag Avenue. The existing land uses in the vicinity are low density single-family residential uses. The parcels are separated by areas of steep topography and low wet areas. Public utilities are not available to these parcels.

Parcels 19, 25, 26 and 27 are recommended for low density residential use. This designation is based upon the existing land use pattern, lack of utilities, and the natural assets of the area.

Parcel 20:

Parcel 20 is occupied by existing low density single-family homes. The homes are in generally good repair. The individual properties have adequate depth to maintain a separation between the residential uses and the East Beltline.

The 22-acre site is planned for high density residential. Given the volume of North East Beltline traffic, individual homesites with individual site access at this location should be discouraged. The individual lots could be consolidated into a multi-family complex with limited site access since sufficient acreage is available. It would also serve as a transitional use, buffering properties fronting Bird Avenue and bridging between planned office space (at the northwest corner of 3 Mile Road and the North East Beltline) and the

institutional uses further to its north.

Parcel 21:

Parcel 21 consists of several larger parcels that have proven difficult to assemble and develop in character with the abutting low density single-family subdivisions found to its west and north. The site also has frontage to 3 Mile Road and is adjacent to a commercial office node planned for the North East Beltline/3 Mile Road intersection. It also lies opposite Orchard View Elementary School and Church. These circumstances provide an opportunity to slightly increase densities to encourage site use and to introduce new housing opportunities near neighboring office/commercial employment centers. The site's location on 3 Mile Road (opposite the church and school) provides good access to the area transportation network via distribution to either Leffingwell Avenue or 3 Mile Road.

Thus, *Parcel 21 is planned for Medium Density Residential use.* Such development, however, must provide ample setbacks from perimeter property lines and incorporate usable open space to be sympathetic in style to adjoining low density single-family developments.

Parcel 22:

Parcel 22 is located between 3 and 4 Mile Roads, west of Bird Avenue. The parcel is located within an area that is primarily occupied by low density residential uses.

Parcel 22 is recommended for low density residential use consistent with its existing use and the use of surrounding properties.

Parcel 23:

Parcel 23 is located on the North East Beltline between 3 and 4 Mile Roads. The property is north of existing and planned low density residential uses and south of the Reformed Bible College Campus, a significant institutional use. The property is located within the Orchard View activity node, an area intended to maintain land use connections to historical uses in the area.

The frontage of Parcel 23 is recommended for institutional use. The rear portion of the parcel is planned for low density residential use. The planned institutional uses are intended to be consistent with the character of the existing religious college. The scope of institutional uses may include such uses as age restricted housing, assisted living facilities, residential care facilities, and/or day care facilities, in addition to educational, cultural and religious uses. It is anticipated that any housing development would be consistent with the mission of the institutional use.

The planned low density residential use is consistent with the development pattern along Bird Avenue.

Parcel 24:

Parcel 24 is located on the east side of the North East Beltline, midway between 3 and 4 Mile Roads. The property is bounded on the south by a Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) stormwater facility. It is bounded on the north by an office park.

Parcel 24 is recommended for office use. This recommendation is based on the adjacent existing land uses, as well as the parcel's accessibility and visibility from the North East Beltline. Although office use is the preferred development pattern, medium density residential use would also be an acceptable use. Medium density residential use will not create compatibility issues with the existing office development and may be able to creatively incorporate adjacent natural assets associated with the MDOT facility and adjacent low lying areas.

Parcels 28, 29 and 30:

Parcels 28, 29 and 30 are currently part of a unique agricultural operation, Robinette's Orchards. Robinette's Orchard operation includes some retail and commercial recreation activities, in addition to the agricultural use of the property. The parcels are generally located within the Orchard View activity node which seeks to maintain the connection between existing uses and future development options as a means of protecting the unique character of this area.

Parcels 28, 29 and 30 are designated for urban agricultural use. This land use classification is intended to sustain the existing use of the property and provide the landowner with some flexibility in regards to introducing new uses associated with the existing orchard operation.

Parcel 28 is located between the North East Beltline and Bird Avenue. The urban agricultural designation for Parcel 28 encourages the continuation of the orchard and allows some flexibility in regards to the introduction of new commercial recreation activities. If the urban agricultural use of Parcel 28 should cease, the parcel is then designated for low density residential use. It is recommended that such development incorporate the design principles of rural clustering so that rural, agricultural character of the property may be preserved.

Parcel 29 is located at the southwest intersection of the East Beltline and 4 Mile Road. Parcel 29 is designated for urban agricultural use. This land use designation is intended to sustain the existing orchard operation and to provide the landowner with the flexibility to introduce new retail and/or commercial recreation activities which are compatible and consistent with the property's current use and character. Future uses may include a bed and breakfast inn, public meeting facilities, and a sit down restaurant.

If the existing use of Parcel 29 should cease, the parcel is then recommended for low density residential use. It is again recommended that such development incorporate the design principles of residential clustering so that some of the rural character of this area may be maintained.

Parcel 30 is located at the northwest intersection of the North East Beltline and 4 Mile Road. Parcel 30 is designated for urban agricultural use. This land use designation is

intended to sustain the existing orchard operation and compatible commercial recreation uses. If the existing use of Parcel 30 should cease, the parcel is then designated for low density residential use. It is recommended that such development incorporate the design principles of rural clustering so that the rural, agricultural character of this area may be maintained.

Parcel 31:

Parcel 31 is located on the east side of the North East Beltline, north of 4 Mile Road. The parcel is immediately south of a former landfill which is maintained by Waste Management, Inc. The parcel's relationship to the former land filling activity is unknown. The landfill is being considered for park/open space use.

Parcel 31 is recommended for park/open space use Consistent with the adjacent landfill property. Absent evidence to the contrary, it should be assumed that this parcel was impacted by the adjacent landfill and may require environmental remediation in order to be redeveloped.

Parcel 32:

Parcel 32 is located on the west side of the North East Beltline, between 4 and 5 Mile Roads. The parcel lies between two areas which are characterized by steep topography and wooded slopes. The rear of Parcel 32 is adjacent to a medium density residential development to the north and a low density singlefamily development to the west.

Parcel 32 is recommended for low density residential use. This recommendation is based on the severe slopes in this vicinity and the existing residential development pattern to the west.

Parcel 33:

Parcel 33 is located on the east side of the North East Beltline, between 4 and 5 Mile Roads. Parcel 33 is bounded by the landfill to the south and an office park to the north. (Parcel 33 is not suspected to have been impacted by the landfill operation.)

Parcel 33 is recommended for office use. This recommendation is consistent with the adjacent land development pattern to the north and compatible with the park/open space proposal to the south. To reduce the potential number of curb cuts in this location, it is recommended that any future office development share a curb cut with the existing office park.

Parcel 34:

Parcel 34 is located at the southwest intersection of the North East Beltline and 5 Mile Road. The parcel is adjacent to a medium density residential development to the south.

Parcel 34 is recommended for office use which may include limited commercial services.

This land use designation is intended to encourage office that includes business and/or personal services intended to serve the office development or residents of the immediately adjacent neighborhoods. The extent of the nonoffice uses should be limited and such uses should be required to be integrated within an office building. Given the existing and planned residential use of adjacent properties on the both sides of the North East Beltline, the architectural character of future buildings should incorporate residential design features such as peaked roofs, regularly placed windows, and a human scale.

Parcel 35:

Parcel 35 is located along the east side of the North East Beltline, south of Grand River Drive. The parcel is characterized by its topographic variation and wooded hillsides.

Parcel 35 is recommended for medium density residential use. This recommendation is based on the natural characteristics of the land and the opportunity to incorporate these features into the site design. It is recommended that future home sites be clustered and oriented so that a substantial setback is maintained from the beltline right-of-way to keep the "view shed" of passersby unobstructed by development. The intent of this recommendation is to conserve scenic views within the portion of the corridor and buffer the community from any negative impacts associated with the flow of traffic.

Parcel 36:

Parcel 36 is located to the east of the North East Beltline. The parcel is characterized by its topographic variation and wooded hillsides. Properties in this area have been previously developed for low density residential use.

Parcel 36 is recommended for medium density residential use. This designation recognizes the parcel's location to nearby commercial uses in Plainfield Township and available utility service, and planned relationship with Parcel 35.

Parcel 37:

Parcel 37 is located at the southwest intersection of the North East Beltline and Grand River Avenue. The parcel is bounded by office development to the south and an institutional use to the west. The parcel has frontage on two roads and limited depth off the North East Beltline.

Parcel 37 is designated for office use. This recommendation considers compatibility issues with the adjacent existing land uses and the parcel's limited depth.

Parcel 38:

Parcel 38 is located at the southeast intersection of the North East Beltline and 4 Mile Road. The parcel is part of the Sunshine Church's landholding and is a part of the Orchard View activity node. The Orchard View area is intended to maintain the

connection between historical uses and planned uses as a means of preserving this area's unique character.

Parcel 38 is recommended for institutional use. This future institutional use of the property should be consistent with the existing religious, educational and cultural uses of the larger property. If consistent with the institution's mission, the use of the property could be expanded to include age restricted housing and residential care facilities such as elder or day care establishments.

Parcel 39:

Parcel 39 incorporates subdivision lots which front the East Beltline from 3 Mile Road south to the midpoint between 3 Mile Road and Knapp Street. The lots within Parcel 39 are characterized by a shallow lot depth and an irregular pattern of single-family residential development.

Parcel 39 is recommended for medium density residential use. This recommendation is intended to provide the owners of these lots with a redevelopment option which will allow for an intensification of use without encouraging additional commercial or office development. The redevelopment option will be most successful if the owners of a series of contiguous lots work cooperatively to market the lots to a single developer.

Land Use Measures

Development Review Process

Issues

The development review process encompasses the entire range of activities undertaken by agencies involved with regulating land uses. This involvement can be mandatory (required by law) or permissive (granted or bestowed to a body, board, or commission for action of an advisory nature, occurring without legal authority).

The state's enabling legislation provides the broad framework for roles, responsibilities, and limitations. Cities and villages are governed by the City-Village Zoning Act, state PA 207 of 1921, as amended. Townships are governed by the Township Zoning Act, state PA 184 of 1943, as amended. These requirements are usually embodied in the local municipal code. Generally, zoning powers are vested in the governing body. They implement their authority by creating the boards and/or commissions and then specifying their individual powers, duties, functions, and procedures.

The powers enjoyed by boards and commissions vary little from community to community, since the application of land use law is relatively uniform throughout Michigan. Variations do emerge between localities, however, in processing procedures. To expedite the review of development projects within the North East Beltline Corridor, it is important to establish consistent procedures for project review.

Process:¹

The traditional process in the evaluation of development petitions can be broken down as follows:

-
- ▶ Acceptance of filed applications and petitions and determination that all required information and documentation is included;
 - ▶ Preliminary processing, including docketing, filing, scheduling hearings, and preliminary review by staff or consultants;
 - ▶ Ensuring proper notification of an application being filed and any required notification of public hearings scheduled to those who are entitled to notice under the ordinance, whether by mail, newspaper publication, or posting of the property;
 - ▶ Maintaining the record;
 - ▶ Conducting any public hearings that are required;
 - ▶ Analysis of the evidence of record; and,
-

¹Refer to *Land Use Practice and Forms: Handling the Land Use Case*, Volume I, second edition, published by Clark Boardman Callaghan (1997) for a more information on this sequence.

- ▶ Final decision in accord with any requirements by law or regulations as to form and content.

Involvement of the Grand Valley Metro Council

The traditional review process should be supplemented by the involvement of a separate standing advisory committee/board which represents the “at large” interests of the North East Beltline corridor. The East Beltline Advisory Board could interact with the local governmental review process in the following manner:

1. Preapplication conference to identify land use design objectives and overlay district regulations;
2. "Ombudsman" role to the assist applicant fulfill local submittal requirements; and,
3. Review of development plans for compliance with subarea design plans.

The involvement of this advisory board should be narrowly focused to clearly define under what circumstances it should be activated. We suggest the following guideposts:

- ▶ Properties which abut the North East Beltline;
- ▶ Properties which have direct access to the North East Beltline; and,
- ▶ Properties 10 acres or more in size within one-quarter mile of the North East Beltline right-of-way.

Compliance with Subarea Design Plans

Issues

In June 1987, townships were given the power to create plans for a smaller geographic areas than the entire township. These plans have been known as subarea plans. The Township Planning Act, state PA 168 of 1959 states, "In addition to the basic plan provided in subsection (1), by a majority vote of the members, the planning commission may adopt a plan for a geographic area less than the entire unincorporated area of the township if, because of the unique physical characteristics of that area, more intensive planning is necessary for the purposes set forth in section 2."

Section 2 states that the purpose of the plan is to promote the public's health, safety and general welfare; to encourage the proper use of resources; to avoid overcrowding; to lessen congestion; to facilitate the provision of public improvements; and to plan for a variety of land uses based on the existing natural and man-made environment.

Townships typically develop subarea plans for areas of special concern such as heavily traveled corridors, areas experiencing extreme growth, and areas in transition (property targeted for redevelopment).

Definitions

It is important that subarea design plans be distinguished from community-wide land use or Master Plans. The following defines both:

Master Plan: A comprehensive, long-range plan intended to guide the growth and development of a community or region that typically includes inventory and analytic sections leading to recommendations for the community's future economic development, housing, recreation and open space, transportation, community facilities, and land use, all related to the community's goals and objectives for these elements.

Subarea Plan: A urban design plan intended to guide the development of a subarea within a community. They typically are created for areas of special concern where intensive planning efforts are needed, to address issues of access management, streetscape design, off-street parking, and site design.

Sample Regulations

Subarea design plans also have legal import. Per Section 6,(4) of PA 168, after adoption of a plan under this section, a site plan for a property located in the plan area that is required to be submitted under section 16,e of the township rural zoning act, Act No. 184 of the Public Acts of 1943, being section 125.286,e of the Michigan Compiled Laws, must comply with the subarea plan.

Given this unique relationship between planning and zoning, townships which have adopted a subarea design plan should amend their zoning code with the addition of the following text:

Subarea Design Plan Compliance: Where the Township has adopted specific area or neighborhood improvement or redevelopment plans and recommendations involving, but not limited to, public rights-of-way, utilities and storm drainage, parking facilities, building placement, access drives, floor space density allocations, building facade and architectural treatment, no site plan and/or building permit shall be approved unless there is general compliance with such Township plan.

Overlay Zoning Approach

Issues

Zoning is one of the principle means to implement a community plan. Through the adoption of a zoning ordinance (text and map), the community is divided into different use districts. Rules and regulations for the development of property are then prescribed for each district. These typically include setbacks from streets and property lines, height limits, and lot coverage limitations for buildings and pavement. There are various kinds of regulations which apply to all or a large number of zoning districts as well. Such regulations are commonly referred to as general provisions. They typically include rules for signs, parking and landscaping, among others.

A key tenant of zoning is that zoning regulations for property within a particular use district classification be uniformly applied; that is, selective application of the rules to individual properties is not permitted. A challenge emerges when, within a particular area of a community or region, multiple zoning districts exist, each with their unique set of land development requirements. Projects independently approved, once constructed, can convey an image to passersby of an uncoordinated development pattern. To compensate for this potential lack of uniformity, communities can join together to create "overlay zoning districts."

Definitions

An overlay zone is a zoning district that encompasses one or more underlying zones and that imposes additional requirements above that required by the underlying zone. Any existing or new development within the overlay district must then comply with the requirements of the underlying zone as with the generally more restrictive requirements of the overlay zone.

Overlay zones are most commonly used when an area requires special protection or has a special problem. Examples include environmentally sensitive areas, historic areas, and highway/scenic corridors.

Procedure for Overlay Zone Regulation Development and Adoption

There are four steps to this legislative process. First, the legislation is introduced, usually in the form of an amendment to existing regulations. Once introduced, the amendment is subject to the scrutiny of the planning commission of the affected jurisdiction. A public hearing is held as the third step. Finally, the legislative body votes on the proposal.

To initiate an amendment, the following steps have been suggested²:

Step 1. Determine the nature and extent of the problem and the land development issues which need to be addressed by ordinance.

Step 2. Determine what changes are necessary within the language of the zoning ordinance, or other section of the municipal code.

²Refer to Land Use Practice and Forms: Handling the Land Use Case, Volume I, second edition, published by Clark Boardman Callaghan (1997) for a more information on this sequence.

- Step 3. Discuss the potential amendments with staff of the planning commission or planning department to gauge support and refine the proposal.
- Step 4. Draft the amendment using a format acceptable to the local legislature.
- Step 5. Contact/meet with members of the local legislative body to explain the proposal and nature of the amendment.
- Step 6. Submit the amendment to the legislative body and request introduction. The amendment should be accompanied by a cover letter explaining the nature, purpose and extent of the proposed amendment.

Given the multi-jurisdictional nature of development along the North East Beltline, we suggest that a committee organized by the Grand Valley Metro Council serve as the authors of this amendment.

It is also important to recognize that the amendment adoption procedures for cities and townships are different in Michigan. Individual communities are directed to review the requirements of the City-Village Zoning Act (state PA 207 of 1921, as amended) and the Township Zoning Act (state PA 184 of 1943, as amended) for specifics on notification, timing and the adoption procedure.

Use Classifications

Issues

Zoning is permissive; that is, if a use is not specifically mentioned in a zoning ordinance it is prohibited. In the past, many municipalities have attempted to identify and classify all conceivable uses within particular districts. They quickly discovered that certain uses become obsolete, and that the marketplace rapidly created uses that were unforeseen.

To compensate, communities have taken the approach to list uses that have a strong historical relationship to the district. Potential uses are accommodated by the inclusion of a phrase similar to the following, added to the listing of specifically permitted uses:

12. Uses similar to the above-referenced uses.

In this manner, zoning administrators and local planning commissions are provided an opportunity to judge whether new uses were “like uses” within a district, by comparing candidate uses to those listed. This approach alone, however, often does not provide adequate direction. Zoning regulations must be sufficiently understood so they are not used in an arbitrary or capricious manner. In addition, pursuant to state enabling law, the zoning ordinance must be made with reasonable consideration to, among other things, the character of each district³. The character of each use district is typically expressed in the district’s statement of purpose or intent clause, and is referred to as a means to judge whether a proposed development project is consistent with the objectives of local zoning.

Definitions

The Land Use Concept Plan prepared for the North East Beltline proposes ten different use districts, two of which (Low and Medium Density Residential) pertain to single-family detached development distinguished only by density. Another (Park/Open Space) is generally considered a use permitted by right in residential zoning districts. To provide a common vocabulary, it is recommended that the affected jurisdictions along the Beltline employ common purpose statements as part of their zoning regulations.

We caution, however, that residential development need not be dull and unimaginative. There are many development styles that may be employed within residential use districts that foster variety and accommodate the densities of today’s housing market. They should be encouraged. Density should be the benchmark. The myriad of design options can be seen by example of the following terms:

Cluster subdivision: A development design technique that concentrates buildings on a part of a site to allow the remaining land to be used as recreation, common open space, and preservation of environmentally sensitive features.

Planned residential development: An area of minimum contiguous size, to be planned, developed, operated, and maintained as a single entity and containing one or more

³ Refer to Section 3 of state PA 184 of 1943, as amended for an example of such a requirement.

residential design styles such as single-family detached, townhouse, or multiple-family residential units.

Zero lot line: The location of a building on a lot in such a manner that one or more of the building's sides rest directly on a lot line.

The form of ownership is also of little consequence. Units can be owned outright or as part of a condominium (where the dwelling or "condominium unit" is owned individually and the common areas and roadways are all owned by the owners on a proportional, undivided basis).

Sample Regulations

To provide a common vernacular, the following "purpose statements" are suggested for adoption as part of zoning regulations.

Low and Medium Density Residential District

The Low and Medium Density Residential District is established as a district in which the principal use of land is for one-family dwellings. The specific intent is:

1. To encourage the construction of, and the continued use of the land for one-family dwellings and related uses such as parks and open space;
2. To prohibit business, commercial, or industrial use of the land, and to prohibit any other use which would substantially interfere with development or continuation of one-family dwellings in the district;
3. To encourage the discontinuance of existing uses that would not be permitted as new uses under the provisions of this Ordinance;
4. To discourage any land use which would generate traffic on minor or local streets other than normal traffic to serve the residences on those streets; and,
5. To discourage any use which, because of its character or size, would create requirements and costs for public services, such as fire and police protection, water supply and sewerage, substantially in excess of such requirements and costs if the district were developed solely for one-family dwellings.

Densities should not exceed 4 dwelling units per acre for the Low Density Residential District and 8 units per acre in the Medium Density Residential District respectively.

High Density Residential District

The High Density Residential District is intended to provide opportunities for the building of low-density, multiple-family dwelling structures. Generally, these are areas

which, due to parcel size and/or configuration, do not lend themselves for normal single-family subdivision designs or those parcels abutting unique natural or manmade features enabling a development scheme designed to maximize those unique features. The intent is further to encourage the development of small multiple-family structures so that the scale of the buildings remain in keeping with a large single-family housing structure. High Density Residential Districts are also designed to serve as “transitional” district between lower density residential developments and nonresidential uses and/or major travel corridors and institutional uses which provide occasional nuisance impacts. Densities should not exceed 16 dwelling units per acre.

Urban Agriculture District

This district is composed of those areas whose primary use is, and ought to be, farming and to provide the landowner with the flexibility to introduce new retail and/or commercial recreation activities which are consistent with the property’s current use and character. Low density residential development is also acceptable within these use districts provided they incorporate the design principles of rural clustering so that some of the agricultural character of the area may be maintained.

Commercial District

The Commercial District is established and designed to meet the shopping and service needs of persons residing in adjacent residential areas as well as to cater to the needs of passerby traffic and comparison goods shoppers. It is the intent of this district to encourage the planned concentration of such activities at locations offering safe and convenient vehicular access, good visibility, and urban infrastructure of the types and sizes necessary to support urban development. Large “box” retailers are discouraged; rather, it is further the intent of the district to establish businesses within an integrated or planned cluster of establishments offering design attributes consistent with human scale and needs (such as pedestrian ways, plazas, and colonnades).

Mixed Service District

The Mixed Service District is intended to provide areas for establishments primarily engaged in providing assistance, as opposed to products, to individuals, business, industry, government, and other enterprises, including hotels and other lodging places; personal, business and repair services; educational facilities and training facilities; and, cultural resources. Such districts should be located in areas offering good regional accessibility and incorporate sufficient building setbacks and landscape buffering techniques to minimize adverse affects on neighboring residential property.

Mixed Use District

The Mixed Use District is established to provide an aesthetically attractive working, shopping, and residential environment—exclusively for the development and protection of office, commercial, cultural, entertainment, institutional and/or residential uses within a single development area. The integration may be achieved vertically (as in the stories of a building) or horizontally (across the whole parcel). As a result, it is recommended that the projects be developed as a “village-like” environment characterized by the following attributes:

1. the design responds to the natural features of the parcel and incorporate those features as development amenities;
2. the buildings are designed to maintain a human scale, including facade and roof articulations;
3. automobile facilities do not dominate the development appearance (parking lots are landscaped and screened from views from the right-of-way);
4. the property boundaries and entrances are defined by architectural and landscape features which establish edges and street walls;
5. the pedestrian pathways connect parking areas and buildings;
6. lighting levels are established in accord to their purpose (pedestrian, parking, vehicular travel); and,
7. signs, light fixtures, and other street furniture reinforce an overall concept design theme.

Office District

The Office District is intended to provide locations for low-intensity, office-type professional and administrative services necessary for the normal conduct of a community's activities. Such districts have the following characteristics: allowable activities take place in attractive buildings in landscaped settings; they generally operate during normal daytime business hours; they produce a minimum amount of traffic; and their use characteristics make them compatible with adjacent residential uses. Support retail and services are permitted within an office district provided these uses are integrated within a planned office development or individual office building.

Institutional Use District

The purpose of this district is to provide opportunities for the establishment, continued use, or expansion of a nonprofit, religious, or public use, such as a church, library, public or private school, hospital, or government owned or operated building structure, or land

used for public purpose. If consistent with the institution's mission, the use of the property could be expanded to include additional accessory uses and structures such as student housing, age restricted (senior) housing, elder or day care establishments, and offices.

Mixed Use District

Mixed use districts (MXD's) are established to permit the flexible and efficient use of large parcels at key locations by combining housing, employment, local commercial and open space in accordance with a unified design. Mixed use development should contain at least one focal point, characterized by an area of diverse, integrated land uses, designed to create a distinct focus, or character for a particular development. Focal points should be scaled and oriented to pedestrian movement and should accommodate future public transit access. Focal points should include land uses such as office and/or residential buildings, retail stores and services, civic or public uses, open space features such as plazas, squares and/or other useable landscaped areas. Appropriate locations for MXD's are defined by the availability of public utilities, good access to collector or arterial highways and the potential for public transit. In addition, they should be compatible with surrounding neighborhoods and respond to and protect the natural landscape. An example of a mixed use district has been placed in the appendix.

MXD Criteria

The following criteria should be discussed and weighed when establishing a MXD Zoning Ordinance:

1. Minimum size requirements for a MXD (*recommend 25 contiguous acres*)
2. Availability of water and sewer service (*recommend this as a requirement*)
3. Proportion of proposed uses (*recommend that no proportion requirements apply to a mix of open space, residential, employment or commercial uses*)
4. Minimum open space requirements (*recommend 30%*)
5. Permitted uses (*recommend professional and/or business office including typical ancillary uses such as lodging, restaurants, reproduction and supply, etc.; residential including small lot single family, zero lot line, single family attached and apartments; commercial uses such as movie theaters, dinner theaters, and community serving retail*)
6. Maximum residential density (*recommend the overall corridor density categories*)
7. Moderate income housing requirement (*recommend same as the overall corridor requirement*)
8. Retail and personal service business total floor area (*recommend establishing a maximum floor area for individual retail establishments of 70,000 sq.ft.*)

MXD Approval Criteria

As MXDs are being reviewed for development approval, the following criteria should be considered:

1. Will the plan result in orderly growth, integration of uses and development consistent with the purposes of an MXD?
2. Will the mix of proposed uses be appropriate to the area surrounding the MXD?
3. Does the development include at least one area of sufficient size and variety of land uses to be a distinct, focal point for the community?
4. Is the land designated for a retail center appropriate for retail and personal services that serve the local community or neighborhood?
5. Does the development provide opportunities for housing choice?
6. When feasible, can public transit facilities and routes be integrated into the development?
7. Is the intensity and scale of development appropriate in relation to the environmental constraints of the site and the character of existing and planned developments in the vicinity of the site?
8. Do proposed open space areas connect or provide opportunities for connections with trails, bikeways or other natural areas or parks?
9. Is the scale, height, and roof design of proposed buildings consistent with the concept of establishing a village-like environment?
10. Are parking lots screened from view using buildings, landscape buffers such as berms, fences or plants?

Landscaping and Architectural Standards

Landscaping Design Standards

The purpose of developing landscape design standards for the East Beltline corridor is to provide a consistent level of design and quality for corridor development. In addition, such standards should address the following issues:

- Protection, preservation and enhancement of the appearance and value of corridor properties
- Buffering potentially incompatible uses from one another and screening undesirable views
- Preventing the unnecessary removal of vegetation during land development
- Landscaping parking lots to facilitate traffic and pedestrian movement, breaking up large impervious surfaces, providing shade, and buffering and screening parking lots from adjacent properties and roads
- Defining responsibilities for the successful installation and long term maintenance of the landscape
- Treatment of the public rights-of-way, including the East Beltline median
- The protection of steep slopes
- The protection of existing vegetation within close proximity of a classified wetland

Sections derived from a Landscape Manual for Howard County, Maryland have been placed in the appendix and these begin to address the issues identified above. In addition, ordinance information has also been included concerning wetland buffers, the protection of steep slopes, woodlands, stream valleys and flood plains.

Setbacks

Sign Regulations

Parking Standards

.....See Appendix.....

Lighting and Underground Utilities

Issues

Good lighting can extend the use of outdoor areas, increase real and perceived safety of different environments, and encourage nighttime use of many areas. The purpose of outdoor lighting includes:

- Improving the legibility of critical circulation and activity nodes;
- Aiding the safe movement of pedestrians and vehicles;
- Promoting a more secure environment;
- Encouraging nighttime use of a site; and
- Emphasizing certain noteworthy elements in the landscape.⁴

Burial of communication system and electric service wires (in place of overhead utility lines) improve the aesthetics of a development site or streetscape by eliminating a visual element which may detract from site lines or obscure an architectural or landscape feature. Underground burial of utility wires is a frequent provision in local subdivision control ordinances.

Definitions

The following terms are important when considering different lighting standards:

- Footcandle: Illumination at point "A" on a surface which is one foot from and perpendicular to a uniform point source of one candela.
- Lux: A unit of illumination equal to the direct illumination on a surface that is everywhere one meter from a uniform point source of one candle intensity or equal to one lumen per square meter.
- Lumen: Light flux falling on a surface one square foot in area, every part of which is one foot from a point source having an intensity of one candela.

Sample Regulations

The following minimal level of lighting regulation is recommended:

1. All outdoor lighting in all use districts other than residential shall be shielded to reduce glare and shall be so arranged as to reflect lights away from all adjacent residential districts, adjacent residences, and public rights-of-way.

⁴ Charles W. Harris and Nicholas J. Dives, *Time-Saver Standards for Landscape Architecture*, McGraw-Hill, 1988, page 540-1.

2. In no instance shall a light pole exceed a specified height in feet measured from grade.

A series of illumination guidelines can also be created that set different standards of lighting based on location (street illumination, parking illumination, building exteriors or signs) and intensity of activity (high, medium or low). An example of such a hierarchy follows:

Parking Illumination

Level of Activity	Active Vehicular Use Areas Only		General Parking and Pedestrian Areas	
	Lux	Footcandles	Lux	Footcandles
Low Activity	5	0.5	2	0.2
Medium Activity	10	1.0	6	0.6
High Activity	20	2.0	10	1.0
High Activity. Examples include major-league athletic events, major cultural or civic events, regional shopping centers, and fast food facilities.				
Medium Activity. Examples include community shopping centers, office parks, hospital parking areas, transportation parking (airports, etc.), cultural, civic or recreational events, and residential complex parking.				
Low Activity. Examples include neighborhood shopping, industrial employee parking, educational facility parking, and church parking.				

The following is a sample zoning provision to require the burial of utility wires:

Underground Wiring: All local distribution lines for communication (telephone, cable, and the like) and electric service, exclusive of main supply and perimeter feed lines, shall be placed underground.

Building Design

Issues

The first design standards were primarily concentrated in historic districts to ensure that the architectural integrity and details of existing historic structures were maintained. Building design standards are now being applied to downtowns, corridors and even entire communities as citizens have become increasingly more dissatisfied with the appearance of new buildings and their relationship to surrounding structures and neighborhoods. The objective of most design standards is to: make streets more

enjoyable, pleasant, visually interesting, and comfortable; to integrate individual buildings with the streetscape, both in scale and style; bring activity occurring within buildings in direct contact with people on the street; enhance the image of the main gateway or corridor into the community; and maintain or improve existing neighborhoods.

Building design regulations typically address design criteria including the relationship of the new building to the site, relationship of the building and site to adjoining areas, building design (materials, color, scale, and other design issues), and maintenance issues. Another typical section in the regulations is approval standards.

There are problems associated with this type of regulation. The first is regulating taste and style. Courts have upheld the right of communities to regulate the design of projects. The important issues raised by design regulations involve the standards and procedures for review. Another potential problem is resentment of design professionals over the stifling of their creativity. A final problem to consider is one of exclusionary zoning. These standards can be used to discourage the construction projects not desired by the community.

Definitions

Typical terms associated with building design review include:

Architectural Features:	Architectural features of a building or structure shall include cornices, eaves, gutters, belt courses, sills, lintels, bay windows, chimneys, and decorative ornaments.
Bulk Plane:	An imaginary inclined plane, rising over a lot, drawn at a specified angle from the vertical, the bottom side of which is coincidental with the lot lines(s) or yard line(s) of the lot, or directly above them, and which together with other bulk regulations and lot size requirements, delineate the maximum bulk of any improvement which may be constructed on the lot.
Decorative Fence:	An open or semi-open fence, ornamental in nature, not intended to provide a permanent barrier to passage or for screening. Decorative fencing does not include chain link fencing.
Porch:	A covered projection on a building or structure containing a floor, which may be either totally enclosed or open except for columns supporting the porch roof, and projects out from the main wall of said building or structure, and has a separate roof or an integral roof with the principal building or structure to which it is attached.
Roof, Flat:	A roof which is not pitched and the surface of which is parallel to the ground.

Roof, Gable:	A ridged roof forming a gable at both ends of the building.
Roof, Hip:	A roof with sloping ends and sides.
Roof, Mansard:	A roof with two slopes on each of four sides, the lower steeper than the upper.

Sample Regulations

In the process of reviewing the submitted materials, the Planning Commission should consider the following major topical areas:

1. Relationship of Buildings to Site
2. Relationship of Buildings and Site to Adjoining Area
 - a. adjacent buildings of different architectural styles should be made compatible by such means as screens, sight breaks, and materials
 - b. Attractive landscape transition to adjoining properties should be provided
 - c. Harmony in texture, lines, and masses should be required. Monotony of design should be avoided
3. Building Design
 - a. Extent of facade articulation through change of materials and/or planes.
 - b. Extent of roof articulation through changes in roof pitch and roof line.
 - c. Quality and variation of materials and colors used in building design
 - d. Regularity and/or rhythm of window placement
 - e. Relationship of architectural design to landscape design

4. Building Maintenance Factors

The approving body should review the particular circumstances and facts applicable to each submittal in terms of the preceding design criteria, and make a finding as to whether the proposal meets the following standards:

- a. The appearance, color, texture and materials being used will preserve property values in the immediate vicinity and will not adversely affect any property values;
- b. The appearance of the building exterior will not detract from the general harmony of, and is compatible with, other buildings already existing in the immediate vicinity;
- c. The appearance of the building exterior will not be garish or otherwise offensive to the sense of sight; and,
- d. The appearance of the building exterior will tend to minimize or prevent discordant and unsightly surroundings in the immediate vicinity.

Transportation

Pedestrian Facilities

Neighborhoods become better places to live and traffic congestion can be decreased if residents and workers are able to walk to some of their destinations. People will walk for some of their trips if some simple conditions are met: destinations are close and there is a safe walkway. Most people are willing to walk a greater distance if the walkway is pleasant as well as safe.

These simple conditions are examined in more detail in the *Pedestrian Plan*, a segment of the *Grand Valley Metropolitan Council Long Range Transportation Plan*. This Plan contains guidelines for installing sidewalks along streets, background information, model language for local units of government and other suggested implementation measures. It is recommended that the three participants in this study adopt the model language and use the Pedestrian Plan as a guide for development.

The following amendments to local ordinances are suggested.

Subdivision Ordinance (and Site Plan Condominiums)

Walkways are required in the middle of long blocks and at the ends of cul de sacs and shall connect as much as possible to existing and anticipated walkways. Walkways shall be provided to provide access to adjacent parks, shopping areas, residential areas, and institutions. If the Planning Commission has adopted a pedestrian access plan for the area, walkways shall be provided to implement that plan.

Site Plan Review

Walkways shall be provided to provide access to adjacent parks, shopping areas, transit stops, anticipated walkways and institutions. If the Planning Commission has adopted a pedestrian access plan for the area, walkways shall be provided to implement that plan. Pedestrian movement must be accommodated across parking lots. These walkways must be separated from automobile travel lanes and parking spaces. [See Guidelines]

It is also recommended that sidewalks be provided along all of the East Beltline in the study area, as well as along Five Mile, Three Mile, Knapp, Leonard, Bradford and part of Leffingwell as shown on one of the plan maps.

It is also important for commercial enterprises, employers and residential developments to provide walkways to transit stops. Related to this is the need to improve pedestrian crossings at these traffic lights.

Bicycle Facilities

The bicycle extends nonmotorized travel from the maximum quarter mile walk to a maximum five mile bicycle ride. In fifteen minutes an adult rider can travel 2.5 miles without much more effort than walking. Since so many people own bicycles, there is a significant potential for an increase in the use of this low cost, healthy mode of transportation.

More people would travel by bicycle if a safe route was available. As with walkways, most people are more likely to ride and ride further if the route is pleasant as well as safe.

A person on bicycle is quite different from a pedestrian, commonly traveling at speeds of 20 miles per hour compared to the pedestrian's 3 miles per hour. Thus all studies and all national standards recommend that the cyclist be treated as a vehicle. The cyclist travels most safely with vehicles moving at roughly the same speed or along side of traffic moving at a higher speed. Placing the cyclist on sidewalks, though necessary sometimes, is in fact dangerous for them at every intersection and dangerous for them and pedestrians when confined to a narrow sidewalk.

A good option for the utilitarian cyclist is riding on streets with low traffic volume and/or low speeds (25 mph). The best option is a bicycle lane on busier streets. A four to five foot striped lane allows the cyclist to get to common destinations swiftly and safely. Anyone who has visited Madison, Seattle, Portland and other cities have probably seen these types of facilities used by hundreds of travelers.

The Bicycle Plan, a segment of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council Long Range Transportation Plan, shows the following roads as part of a future network of bicycle friendly facilities: East Beltline, Three Mile Road, Knapp Street, Leonard Street, Leffingwell Avenue, and Bradford Avenue. Most of these streets would have to have bicycle lanes added. The Bicycle Plan provides standards for development of facilities and suggests that local units develop more detailed plans.

A requirement for a minimum number bicycle parking with racks for multi-family housing, retail, office, multi use and institutional development should be added to zoning and site plan review ordinances. A model is included in the appendix of this document. The standard is for one bike space for every ten automobile spaces. Eight bicycle parking spaces take up the same amount of space as one automobile space, but could reduce parking needs by eight spaces.

Access Management

Careful management of the number and spacing of driveways and roads that intersect the East Beltline will protect its capacity for carrying traffic safely and effectively. Thus far this has been done fairly well due to the design of the road and the perseverance of local and state officials. Their efforts may be more strongly challenged with greater development pressures and could be supported by more specific local ordinances.

An access management ordinance for the East Beltline is being provided with this project and includes the following standards:

Unsignalized driveway spacing: Following MDOT standards, driveways should be spaced at least 350 feet apart where speeds are 40 mph and 455 feet apart where speeds are 50 miles per hour or above. Greater distances may be needed where sight distances are poor.

Spacing of driveways from signalized intersections on the East Beltline and on intersecting streets should be at least 460 feet.

When subdividing and requesting site plan approval, the right for joint access and cross access should be obtained.

Sites with access available from other streets should be limited to access from that street.

Each parcel should be limited to a maximum of one access point.

Driveways should be able to accommodate at least three vehicles waiting to exit or to park..

Deceleration lanes should be required for sites other than undeveloped areas or individual homes and built according to State standards.

Transit Service

This plan shows a level of development which would benefit from higher levels of transit service.

Present Level of Service

At this time the Leonard Street bus route loops through the Kent Intermediate School District, travels along Knapp Street entering the Meijers site, and returns south down the East Beltline to Leonard Street. Passengers would have better access to planned and existing development on the East Beltline if there were bus stops near the two traffic signals between Knapp and Leonard. Bus stops along the East Beltline should be near traffic signals so that passengers would be able to safely cross the road at the signal. The busses at this time have no place to stop along the East Beltline. Bus turnouts should be constructed at these two locations as well as pedestrian crossing markings and the necessary sidewalks. MDOT has provided such turnouts along Grand River Drive in East Lansing, Michigan.

Bus riders who wish to visit the Meijers Botanical Garden, a regionally important cultural site, must now disembark on Leonard Street, and walk about a mile to the entrance on Bradford. If the Garden gains frontage on the East Beltline and if institutional development occurs at Bradford and Leffingwell, the Leonard Street route could be extended south and loop around Bradford and Leffingwell back to Leonard. If that happened, visitors to the Gardens could be dropped off at the traffic signal across from the north end of the site.

Intermediate Steps

The draft long range GRATA plan shows an express bus route along the East Beltline. However there are some inexpensive steps that could be taken immediately or in the near future. The above described extension of the Leonard Street route. A another bus could be added to the Plainfield route and it could be extended past North Kent Mall to the intersection with the East Beltline where it would turn south down the East Beltline to 5 Mile Road and return to Plainfield along 5 Mile Road. There are already 200 requests in the past year for extension of the Plainfield route to the Mall area. This extension would also serve planned development at the gravel yard north of Grand River Road, and the high concentration of residences at 5 Mile and the East Beltline and at 5 Mile and Plainfield. The possibility of a stop on the East Beltline near the entrance to the apartments north of 5 Mile Road should be considered. There is no traffic signal, however topography may discourage riders from crossing the highway there. These two extensions would provide minimum service to the two more highly developed areas of the future corridor at a relatively low cost: an estimated \$80,000 per year for the extra bus and extension of the Plainfield Route. Perhaps the same for a complete extension of the Leonard Street Route, and about \$20,000 for the bus turnouts on the East Beltline.

Long Range Plan

As the urban area spreads, the wheel spokes pattern of bus routes become too long for efficient service and should be supplemented by cross town routes. That is part of the reason the express route was proposed for the East Beltline. This route would extend from the River on the north to Kentwood on the south. When development has progressed further, this route should be put into service, perhaps eliminating some of the

loops on connecting routes. Bus stop pullouts should then be constructed along both sides of the East Beltline at traffic signals. These are likely to be spaced at mile intervals on the north end of the study area and up to one quarter mile intervals at the south end of the study area.

Pedestrian Improvements

The pedestrian section describes important improvements for walkways which are necessary for the effective use of public transit.

All of these transit and complementary pedestrian improvements will contribute to reducing automobile traffic on the East Beltline and extending its capacity.

Environmental Standards

Stormwater Control

Issues

Typically, land development alters natural drainage patterns and increases the amount of surface area which sheds water rather than absorbs it. Drainage swales and stormwater detention/retention ponds are used to channel and collect stormwater run-off. Stormwater facilities must be designed according to engineering standards in order to function properly. Stormwater ponds can also be used to improve the quality of stormwater through the installation of sedimentation traps and oil/grease separators.

Often the engineering requirements of stormwater control overshadow the planning issues related to these facilities. From a planning perspective, the design and detailing of stormwater facilities is an important site design consideration. In a setting such as the North East Beltline corridor, stormwater facilities should be designed to have a naturalized appearance that should be enhanced by plantings.

Definitions

The following definitions are useful when discussing the regulation of stormwater control facilities:

Detention pond: A facility for the temporary storage of stormwater run-off.

Retention pond: A pond, pool or basin used for the permanent storage of stormwater run-off.

Sample Ordinance

A local government stormwater management program will likely include the following objectives:

- ▶ To recognize private responsibility to incorporate stormwater management systems into the early stages of site planning and design.
- ▶ To allow for off-site stormwater management under specified conditions.
- ▶ To ensure that stormwater conveyance and detention facilities will be properly maintained.⁵

The local stormwater management ordinance which include performance standards (best management practices) as well as design standards and specifications. The performance standards provide developers with specific design criteria for stormwater management facilities. Performance standards determine what needs to be accomplished, the developer/property owner chooses how best to accomplish that goal. Design standards and specifications may also be published as guidelines to acceptable design solutions.

⁵ *Controlling Stormwater Run-off from New Developments: A Guidebook for Michigan Communities*, Clinton River Watershed Council, March 1995, p.14.

Designs providing an equivalent or greater level of management control would also be acceptable.

Specific development plan review guidelines may also be locally adopted as part of a municipalities site plan review authority. The review guidelines may include the following criteria:

1. Retain stormwater on the site through retention and detention basins, ponds, and natural drainage areas. Design stormwater management facilities and areas to provide water quality and water control benefits.
2. Use depressions, swales, wetlands, and other natural drainage areas to hold stormwater and provide for slow release to groundwater (when soils permit).
3. Minimize the amount of paved surface areas on the site.
4. Coordinate erosion control measures with longer-term stormwater management measures.
5. Identify and assess stormwater run-off flows from drainage areas above the site, including the potential runoff effects downstream.
6. Manage stormwater so that the outflow from the site after development does not exceed the outflow from the site prior to development.
7. Coordinate stormwater management plans with open space plans for the site, encouraging multiple use of drainage courses and stormwater management areas whenever possible.
8. Delineate stormwater easements which will be used for maintenance purposes on the development plan.
9. Identify stormwater routing and storage for the 100-year storm event as well as the 10-years storm event.
10. Assign clear responsibility for long-term maintenance of retention and detention basins, including periodic cleaning of filters, removal of debris and sediment, and weed cutting.⁶

⁶ Water Quality Guidelines for Development Plan Reviews: A Handbook for Local Officials in Southeast Michigan, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, 1980, p. 62-63.

Wetland and Stream Buffers

.....See Appendix.....

Steep Slope Protection

.....See Appendix.....

Tree and Woodland Protection

.....See Appendix.....

Affordable Housing

Each jurisdiction should provide housing in a range of affordable costs and in a number which is in proportion to all household income levels in the metropolitan area, especially low and moderate income households. The term “affordable housing” as used here refers to housing that is affordable to households receiving less than 50% of the median household income for the metropolitan area.

Affordable housing will be provided in the corridor at a rate of ten per cent of the additional housing provided. The final estimate based on the land use plan means that 245 affordable housing units would be provided. Such housing will be encouraged by providing a bonus of at least ten percent additional housing units for the provision of the affordable housing. As details are worked out further, it may be decided that a greater ratio of bonus housing to affordable housing is needed. For example, two additional housing units allowed for each unit of affordable housing provided. An example of zoning regulations which requires affordable housing is found in the Mixed Use District in the Appendix.

Affordable housing will be incorporated into all parts of the planning area. It will not be provided in an isolated and concentrated way. It should be located near transit service, stores, schools and employment.

The three participating jurisdictions will work through the Grand Rapids Housing Commission, the Kent County Housing Commission and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority to make use of programs and methods for the provision of affordable housing. These programs and methods include federal tax credits. These credits are transferrable and there is a good market for them. This program is administered by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority and can cover up to 40% or 50% of housing development costs. Another program from the State allows local government to waive property tax on apartments for qualified developers who are participating low cost housing program. Instead the local government can collect a service fee equal to 4 to 10% of the rent. The City of Grand Rapids has used this payment in lieu of taxes [PILOT] program to support at least 40 units each year. The City and Townships could agree to sewer and water incentives for hookups and rate

setting to encourage development of affordable housing. Building permits could also be waived or lowered. The City and Townships, along with the Homebuilders Association could examine zoning ordinances to see if minimum lot sizes, minimum house sizes and other requirements are resulting in the exclusion of affordable housing. The Townships and City can solicit landlords for enrollment in the Section 8 program through notices in their newsletters and the newspapers. There are a variety of financial programs available to low and moderate income households from mortgage lending institutions for the purchase of housing.

The board set up by the three jurisdictions to implement the plan should continue to discuss all methods of providing and encouraging affordable housing and also ways to show the public the value to the community of affordable housing.

Communities themselves may need to explore what it means to be a community – does it mean having a cross section of income levels? What are the actual effects of having a small percentage of lower income households and housing in a community? The emergence of new planning ideas of mixed use, better attention to urban design, avoidance of concentration of assisted housing, and development of “metropolitan towns” may make the provision of affordable housing more feasible and acceptable.

Implementation Committee

The Board recommends the establishment of a multi jurisdictional planning advisory board that would review new developments in the planning area according to the guidelines of this plan and guide the implementation of this plan. The Board should include two elected or appointed persons from each participating jurisdiction and one staff person from each jurisdiction.

